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Philomorus.



A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF
THE LATIN POEMS
OF
SIR THOMAS MORE.

— Φιλόμωρον sese declarabat.
ERASMI EPIST.

By J. H. Moreton



LONDON
WILLIAM PICKERING
MDCCCLXII



C. WHITTINGHAM, TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE.



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PHILOMORUS.

AMONG the numerous biographers, who have undertaken at successive periods to delineate the character and review the writings of this great and good man, down from Roper, with his simple narrative, to Mackintosh, with his able and elaborate criticisms, few have deemed it worth while to bestow even a cursory glance upon his poetry. The English stanzas which he left behind him are rarely noticed, and the Latin poems seem to be entirely forgotten. If the name of More be connected in our ideas with any work of the imagination, it is as the subject rather than the composer ; and in truth the affecting vicissitudes of his fortune have supplied abundant materials for the poet and the dramatist in every succeeding age. There is said to be still extant in

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manuscript an ancient and almost contemporary tragedy with its quaint title,—“The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More;” and in our own times a similar production may be found among the works of a late Professor of Poetry at Oxford. Even foreign dramatists have selected him as their hero; and it is upon record that the astute and haughty Richelieu was invariably melted into tears by the scenic representation of his misfortunes. How pathetically has one of our modern bards interwoven with his theme, the story of that

— blushing maid,
Who through the streets as through a desert stray'd,
And, when her dear, dear father pass'd along,
Would not be held; but bursting through the throng,
Halberd and battle-axe, kiss'd him o'er and o'er,
Then turn'd and went, then sought him as before,
Believing she should see his face no more.

ROGERS—*Human Life*.

In short, the melancholy association of his name with historical events and individual sufferings of extreme interest, has thrown his literary attainments almost entirely into the shade. With one memorable exception,

all his writings, whether Latin or English, whether prose or poetry, have sunk into oblivion.

That one exception, indeed, the celebrated Utopia, is doubtless imaginative in its general character, and may fairly enough be designated a Romance. But how different from a Romance in the ordinary sense of the word ! It is visionary without being poetical ; its philosophical disquisitions amuse the fancy, but they do not touch the heart. We must acknowledge, however, that all the poetry which he wrote sinks into comparative insignificance, when we consider the effect which such compositions as this must have produced upon the age in which he lived.

At the same time, we cannot but regard with curiosity the playful moments of a life so full of interest in its progress, and so tragical in its close. The productions of a scholar who was admired by Erasmus for his learning, and courted by Henry VIII. for his wit, must at all events be worthy of examination. We have here the genuine effusions of an active, observant, and sensitive

mind, seeking amusement during the brief intervals of professional engagements in Latin versification. They present unquestionable marks of his individual character; like himself they are simple, unaffected, natural. They are seasoned with his homely wit; they breathe the native tenderness of his disposition, as yet unembittered by the acrimony of polemics. They record his observations on passing events, which are now become matter of history. Their connexion with his domestic habits, if they had possessed even a smaller share of point and elegance than it is usual to give them credit for, would have rendered them valuable to all who are interested in his character. It is this inborn and household simplicity which gives reality to our notion of the man himself; and some one has truly remarked, that the charm of it seems as if it would be taken off by polish. If the traditionary anecdotes and apophthegms handed down in his family be recorded with so much care, these which come directly from his own pen deserve at least a better fate than to be neglected.

Although the style is confessedly not of the purest character, savouring much more of the corrupted and colloquial school of which Erasmus was the founder, than the classical elegance of his contemporary Latinists in Italy ; although it be acknowledged that his taste was imperfect, and that these effusions are rather recommended by his fame than calculated to increase it ; still, it would be unjust to his memory to acquiesce without further inquiry in the sentence which has been tacitly passed upon them by his biographers. If the outpourings of his affection be couched in language less idiomatic and in numbers less mellifluous than those of Sanazarius or Bembo, they are, at least, more racy and genuine, emanating more directly from the heart. If the wit is sometimes alloyed with a coarseness offensive to modern refinement, it was rather the fault of the age than the individual : and he is altogether free from the charge to which some of his more elegant contemporaries are liable, of making poesy and erudition subservient to immorality. In point of clearness and

vigour of intellect he stands pre-eminent. In the smooth productions of that Italian school the eye glides onward from line to line without discovering any prominent or majestic object to rest upon; but in More's poetry the idea stands out boldly, and engages the attention at once.

And in reference to the acknowledged defects of style, which even in his own times were severely animadverted upon by an angry critic in France, and are doubtless the principal cause of the neglect into which these poems have fallen in modern days, it may be sufficient to quote the observation of Erasmus, that amid such a multiplicity of professional engagements, it is only to be wondered at that he found leisure to write at all. This indefatigable lawyer, of whom it is on record that there was no case of importance in controversy before the courts of law, in which he was not counsel for one of the parties; and that in after times as Chancellor, he effected a clearance of his cause-paper,

The which shall never *more* be seen,
Till More be there again :—

he, whose eloquence swayed the House of Commons, while his acuteness perplexed the most renowned theologians when he entered into their province :—he, who was repeatedly employed in negotiation with foreign potentates, and amid all his public avocations continued to exercise a superintendence of the most careful description over his children and servants at home ;—this statesman and diplomatist, enthusiastic as was his love of learning in all its branches, cannot be supposed to have spared much time for the rules of metrical composition, with which even the most accomplished scholars of our northern regions were at that time very imperfectly acquainted. At the present day it is not uncommon for men of the greatest eminence, in every rank and profession, to seek an exercise of their scholarship or a relaxation from their cares in the composition of Latin verses ; and to such as have spent the most valuable years of their early life at the public schools and Universities in acquiring a faci-

lity and correctness of style, it is easy and natural to revert to it afterwards. But with More it was far otherwise. A dark and ignorant system of scholastic instruction prevailed throughout the land; and among the gentry it was no uncommon opinion that literature ought to be left to the children of their hinds and servants. The few scholars that England possessed were such as had studied under the great lights of learning at Rome. To obtain classical instruction at home, especially in the Greek language, was no less difficult than it would have been half a century ago to meet with a teacher of Sanscrit. Again, we exclaim with Erasmus,—“ what might not so admirable a wit have produced, if it had enjoyed the good fortune to be fostered and trained in Italy, if it had been devoted exclusively to literature, and if it had been suffered to ripen to maturity! ”

At the same time his attainments in classical learning were by no means contemptible. Grocyn, who had himself studied in Italy under Politian and Demetrius Chalcondyles, was his instructor at Oxford: and notwith-

standing the discouragement of his father, who was prejudiced in favour of the old system of education, he had acquired a competent knowledge of Greek. His thirst for classical literature was insatiable ; and there is little doubt that the period of retirement into which he was driven by the displeasure of Henry VII. was occupied in the prosecution of these studies. At a time when William Latimer, one of the most eminent scholars of the age, declared in a letter to Erasmus, that he had not read a single page of Greek or Latin for nine years, and that Greek books could not be procured without extreme difficulty, More was always to be found, after the laborious duties of his profession, with the authors of Greece and Rome in his hand. And in fact among the Grocyns, and Linacres, and Colets of his age, that small circle of learned and clever men, who mainly contributed by their exertions to the introduction of polite literature into England, his name always occupies a prominent situation. On a certain occasion when one of the school divines, in a sermon at court, had been

declaiming against the new learning as heretical, More was commissioned by the King to undertake its defence. He addressed also a letter to the University of Oxford, reproaching them with the neglect of Greek, and pointing to the better example of Cambridge. So that, even if his name had not been on other accounts illustrious in history, these early specimens of Latin versification by an English scholar, made at a period when our country was just emerging from the long night of ignorance and superstition, would be to the literary antiquarian a subject of considerable interest.

With regard to the poetical merits of these compositions, they seem to have been as much overrated in some instances as they are underrated in others. By one contemporary critic he is exalted to the honourable pre-eminence of the poet of England, and all the court of Parnassus is represented as mourning over his fate; while another compares his character and attainments to those of Cicero, with a special exception of the gift of poesy in More's favour. To descend,

however, from these fanciful vagaries to the sober language of truth, we find Stapleton saying,

Festivus fuit et poeta suavis.

Huet remarks, that he was second to none as a translator; and Jortin says, with characteristic bluntness and brevity, " he was no bad poet, and might have been a better if he had paid more assiduous court to the muses." Mackintosh endeavours to prove that he was a poet from the harmonious structure of his English versification; there being, as he argues, a secret connexion between a poetical ear and poetical sensibility. Perhaps, if Mackintosh had bestowed a more careful examination upon the neglected volume before us, he would have arrived at the same conclusion, by a less circuitous and more satisfactory route.

The fashion of writing verses in Latin had become so general among the literati of Italy and Germany, as to bring the vernacular dialects into neglect; and to cause some excellent poets to be lost to their language and

nation. Perhaps More was actuated by a desire to emulate more particularly the fame of Picus of Mirandula, whose life he translated into English, and whose talents in some degree resembled his own. His knowledge of the Greek language opened to him the inexhaustible storehouse of the Anthologia, where his facetious mind discovered much that was congenial; and the brevity of the epigram suiting well with the snatches of leisure which were stolen from graver occupations, he amused himself by translating them into Latin verse. On one occasion, in the early part of his life, he entered the lists in a sort of sportive competition with his friend William Lily, the grammarian; and we have their respective translations of the same epigram transmitted to us in juxta-position, as the "*Progymnasmata Thomæ Mori et Guilielmi Liliï sodalium.*" Of the merits, either absolute or comparative, of these juvenile performances, there is little to be said. If we form our judgment from Lily's other essays in Latin versification, those popular compositions which the classical aspirant is taught to

study more diligently than even the works of Virgil himself, we shall not expect to find much that is graceful in idea, or felicitous in expression. And if More's translations be pronounced in some degree superior to his rival's, or if it be said that in after years he surpassed these crude attempts of his youth, it will amount at best to a very faint commendation.

In speaking, however, of More's subsequent productions, it must be understood that we have no fresh discoveries to boast of, no unpublished manuscript, nor even a single reprint from rare and inaccessible volumes. His Latin poems, under the general title of "Epigrammata," have been before the public for centuries. One or two of them, which will be mentioned more particularly hereafter, were published by the author himself; but the collection in its present form issued from the press of Froben at Basle, not only without his superintendence, but almost without his knowledge; being printed from a manuscript supplied by Erasmus, consisting of detached copies made by various friends without his authority or sanction. Some of

them were the productions of his boyhood, others of his early youth, and the latest were written about his thirty-fifth year, a period, probably the happiest of his life ; his fame and fortune being now established, and his mind as yet undisturbed by the splendid distractions of a court. His own opinion of their merits is thus given in one of his epistles to Erasmus : “ I was never much delighted with my epigrams, as you are well aware ; and if they had not pleased yourself and certain others better than they pleased me, the volume would never have been published.”

The subjects of these epigrams are miscellaneous and manifold. When his public avocations had left him little or no leisure for consulting the ponderous *Anthologia*, he exchanged the study of books for that of men. The ignorance of the clergy, the foibles of the fair sex, the pretensions of sciolists, and the tricks of astrologers, in short the follies and weaknesses of mankind in general, supplied him with abundant materials for satire ; while his descriptive powers were exercised upon the various objects of art or nature, that

attracted his observant eye. Events of a national character are in several instances recorded; and other occurrences in private life, which an ordinary person would have passed over and forgotten, are made the subject of a stanza. The weasel and the rabbit, the spider and the fly, are by no means too trifling for him; and he describes in numbers not inelegant, the attitudes of a cat playing with a mouse.

Like his friend Erasmus, he was ready to embrace every moment of leisure, and to extract amusement from every occurrence of life. At a period when the ordinary mode of travelling was on horseback, it was the practice of both these eminent scholars to beguile the tediousness of the journey, by employing their thoughts upon composition as they rode along. Erasmus composed a poem upon the inconveniences of old age, while crossing the Alps into Italy; and we are told that he devised the plan of the *Encomium Moriae* during a journey to England, —“ *ne totum hoc tempus quo equo fuit insidendum, ἀμούσοις et illiteratis fabulis tere-*

retur :” In the present days of locomotive luxury, it may excite a smile to be informed that one of the most interesting productions in the volume before us, an epistle to his children at home, was composed by its author on the back of a slow and stumbling nag, as he journied along miry roads, probably in Flanders, where he was charged at the time with important diplomatic negotiations.

It is stated by his biographers to have been his constant practice, when absent from home, to maintain an intercourse by letter with his children ; receiving from them an account of every step in their progress, and giving them in return whatever counsel and instruction he deemed requisite. Of such epistles the one before us is an elegant and valuable specimen.

The order in which these Epigrammata are printed, is undoubtedly to a certain extent the same in which they were composed. At the head of them, however, is placed a gratulatory address to Henry VIII. on his coronation ; which ought, according to the arrangement of dates, to have been placed considerably later, being written in the year

1509. It is prefaced by an epistle in prose, which exhibits characteristic marks of his vivacity and humour. Some delay having occurred in the presentation of this poem, he deems it expedient to state the cause; and proceeds accordingly to explain, that the artist who had undertaken to embellish it with an appropriate device was incapacitated by a fit of the gout. He expresses a fear lest in waiting for these adventitious attractions, which he compares to the artificial bloom in a lady's complexion, he had deprived his verses of their chief recommendation, the charm of novelty. He doubts after all, whether the advantage accruing from the adroitness of the artist's *hand*, is sufficient to make amends for the damage sustained through the incapacity of his *feet*. He alludes to the well-known reply given by the Emperor Tiberius to the people of Ilium, who came to him with their condolence on the death of his son; intimating at the same time that his own tardiness cannot be deemed quite so ridiculous as theirs, inasmuch as the subject of his congratulations is an event

of such universal joy, as to be impressed upon men's minds with a vividness which it would take ages to efface.

In the national enthusiasm with which this youthful monarch was welcomed to the throne of his avaricious father, no one had greater reason to participate than More. Enraged with his opposition in the Commons to a vote of money for which he had applied on the marriage of his daughter, the late King had committed More's unoffending father to the Tower; upon a charge, as Mackintosh supposes, of having infringed some obsolete penal statute: and it was only by the payment of a heavy fine that he regained his liberty. The son found it expedient to withdraw himself from public life; and, at the time of Henry's death, was meditating a journey into foreign parts. Emerging therefore from retirement, and entering once more into the excitement of active duties, he fearlessly gives utterance in these lines to the indignant feelings of his heart. The allusion to "*tot furum tot uncas manus*," and to the "*leges nocere coactæ*," is perfectly

intelligible. In contrast with the most biting satire upon the sordid and rapacious proceedings of the late monarch, he pours out the most lavish encomiums of the present; and if there had existed in Henry's bosom one spark of respect for his father's memory, the sentiments here expressed, so far from recommending the writer to his good graces, would have produced an effect decidedly the reverse. Such, however, was the fashion of the day: and when we find it adopted in the grave compositions of churchmen, we can scarcely be surprised that their brethren of the laity should have followed the example. In the funeral sermon of Henry VII.'s mother, preached by the good Bishop Fisher scarcely three months after the decease of Henry himself, the following passage occurs,—"avarice and covetyse she most hated, and sorrowed it full much in all persons, but specially in any that belonged to her:"—an insinuation quite as intelligible as the more direct charges made by More.

The personal advantages possessed by the young monarch, his stature and gait, his

manly vigour, the fire of his eye, and the beauty of his complexion, are described with minuteness; his skill in warlike exercises is alluded to, and his love of literature is not forgotten. At a time when all the scholars and courtiers in the land were vying with each other in the extravagance of their praises, when one of the foreign ambassadors was likening him to the deities of Greece and Rome, and even Erasmus was celebrating his piety and discretion, we can scarcely be surprised that a panegyric fell from the pen of More; but these high-flown encomiums on his modesty, his ingenuous humility, and above all his clemency, from one of the most illustrious of all his future victims, give birth to sad reflections. The complimentary epistles addressed to Henry on his accession, have sometimes been quoted as proofs of the natural excellence of his disposition; to a sober inquirer, however, they seem nothing more than the privileged flattery of courtiers, overjoyed by the exchange of an aged recluse, whose selfishness was growing with his years, for a youthful gallant like his son. The single

good quality which More ascribes to the father, is prudence ; and this he introduces merely for the purpose of making good an assertion, that from each of his progenitors Henry had inherited their principal excellence. The noble heart of his grandsire, Edward IV. the piety of the lady Margaret, his grandmother, his mother's kindly disposition, and his father's *prudence*,—these virtues conspire to make up, as More observes, the character of such a monarch as had never before ascended the throne. And such in truth, though not according to More's meaning, was Henry VIII. The worst crimes of the father, selfish and unfeeling as he was, and the most unjustifiable wrongs inflicted by him upon the family of More, are mild and gentle, when compared with the cruelties perpetrated by his successor on the unconscious writer of this panegyric. Softened by no recollection of familiar intercourse, that communion of counsels, of studies, and of social pleasures, which usually form a bond of fellowship not easily to be broken, he trampled under foot the obligations of cour-

tesy, of humanity, and even of justice. After the lapse of a few more years it was More's fortune to become the familiar friend of the youthful sovereign whom he was eulogizing, and by the same "*princeps amatissimus*" he was at last cruelly put to death.

In another part of this collection we have a spirited ode upon the death of tyrants, which contains internal evidence of having been composed about the same period. All victims of kingly oppression are exhorted to take courage and hope for better times ; for if no other change occurs to befriend them, death, the tyrannicide, the avenger of the persecuted, will sooner or later hurl down the oppressor from his throne, and lay him prostrate, an object of scorn and derision, at their feet,

—*miser, abjectus, solus, inermis, inops.*

This train of reflections would be suggested to one in More's circumstances by the death of his persecutor ; and we recognize the spirit, if not the language, of those models of classical antiquity, which had been of late the subject of his studies.

An allusion is made in the Gratulatory verses, to Henry's marriage, which is rendered the more interesting by the fact of his adherence to that marriage having proved, eventually, the cause of his disgrace and downfall. It is clear that he could not have acquiesced in Catharine's divorce without abandoning the sentiments expressed in these lines. When the muse is invoked to sing the praises and celebrate the virtues of a youthful Queen, all the devices of poesy are put into requisition; but in this instance, even the bounds of poetic licence seem to have been overpassed. Poor Catharine is exalted to a preeminence over all the heroines of antiquity. She is described as excelling Cornelia in eloquence, Tanaquil in wisdom, and Alcestis in devotedness to her husband. Penelope's constancy is as nothing in comparison with that of Catharine, who, resisting the calls of her sister, her parents, and her country,

Sola tui longâ mansit amore morâ.

Her female infant is represented as the anchor of the succession, firm and secure, in

case there should be no further progeny. But the poet boldly promises a son ; and proclaims that Henry's descendants in the male line shall succeed to their father's sceptre for countless generations. No foreign wars shall molest him, even if France and Scotland should league together ; nor shall his peace be disturbed by intestine commotion, all contending interests being united in his own person. The nobility, kept so long at a cold and cautious distance,—“ *nomen inane diu*,”—now begin to lift up their heads ; the merchants are relieved from their oppressive imposts ; and the race of informers is extinct. These lines, in short, as illustrative of the general state of affairs at Henry's accession to the throne, and the universal joy with which the nation received him, possess considerable historical interest ; and are referred to by Hume among his authorities for the events of the period.

Besides the *Carmen Gratulatorium*, there are several shorter pieces relating to the same subject. The ceremony of the coronation was performed at an immense cost, and with

much splendour. The royal pair, arrayed in vestments of the richest material, and glittering with precious stones, went along streets hung with tapestry from the Tower to Westminster, attended by nine youths on stately coursers, representing the nine kingdoms and provinces which Henry governed.

While this goodly procession was advancing, a shower of rain began to fall; the sun, however, continuing to shine as before. Hence the poet takes occasion to remind us, that both "Phœbus" and "Jovis uxor" conspire to bestow their auspices upon the event. After the coronation came the jousts and tournaments, which were on a scale of unusual magnificence; and More commemorates the fact of their having been concluded without a single misfortune. No transfixing knight had bedewed the arena with his blood, no unlucky plebeian had been struck by a misdirected lance, or trampled upon by a rampant steed, or crushed by the fall of a scaffold: they had been distinguished by an "innocentia"—an absence of all mischief—characteristic of Henry himself. It is elsewhere

recorded, that if the King had not interposed between the knights of Dian and the knights of Minerva, who were proceeding to fight to the utterance on this occasion, the entertainment would not have proved so bloodless as it is represented ; so that the compliment implied in these lines was not without foundation. At the same time, the praise of Henry's "innocentia" sounds strangely in our ears. This piece is followed by two others on the same subject, in the former of which it is proved on the principles of Platonic philosophy, that the iron age is ended, and the golden about to commence ; and in the other, which is descriptive of the union of the roses, Henry is represented as uniting in one rose all the beauties of the other two. The concluding line of the latter seems to be the truest that More produced upon the subject ;

Nempe etiam spinas flos habet iste suas.

These were written in the year 1509. About the year 1513 he wrote a few lines upon the capture of the castle of Norham in Northumberland, by the Scottish king. This

fortress, situated on the confines of Scotland, was repeatedly taken and retaken ; and had a principal share in all the border warfare of the period. It is intimated in these lines, that James professed to lay siege to it, although at the time it had been already betrayed into his power ; and that the traitor was afterwards put to death by his command. After the battle of Flodden Field, in which James was slain, Norham of course fell once more into the hands of the English. This succession of events affords to More the opportunity of investing the place with a mysterious kind of fatality. The traitor and the king, to whom it was betrayed, are both dead ; while the “ *arx invicta* ” itself is again in the possession of its rightful owners. It is curious to find a tradition still lingering on the spot, that the castle was won by treachery, and that the traitor was afterwards hung for his pains. It seems to be hinted at by Scott in his poem of *Marmion* :

And first they heard King James had won
Etall and Wark and Ford, and then

That Norham Castle strong was ta'en :—
At that sore marvelled Marmion.—

CANTO v. 34.

Thus the local tradition of an event omitted by the historians, is corroborated by one of More's epigrams; and the certainty of the fact placed beyond all reasonable doubt.

This is followed by a few lines upon James's untimely end, a specimen of that uncommon class of epitaphs which may be styled condemnatory. With all due admiration for his valour, and sympathy with his misfortunes, the poet denounces in round terms the duplicity of his dealings with England; and represents him as calling upon monarchs in general to take warning by his example, and to stand firm to their plighted faith.

It is to be observed, that after the battle, a body, supposed to be that of the king, was enclosed in a leaden coffin and conveyed to London, where it was ignominiously kept for some time without the rites of sepulture; and it was probably the interest excited there by its presence which suggested the composition of these lines. In Scotland, however,

it was asserted that James had escaped, and that the corpse taken to London was that of another person. Among the Latin poems of Buchanan is an epitaph which may be set in contrast with that of More, as indicative of the national feeling in the two countries. "Cease"—the monarch exclaims—"to enquire the place where my remains are deposited: if the fates would grant me a burial-place correspondent with the greatness of my soul, the whole compass of Britain would be too narrow for my sepulchre."

At the time when the Earl of Surrey was conducting the English arms with so much success on the borders, Henry himself was occupied with his warlike proceedings against France, in the course of which several events occurred to call forth the exercise of More's poetical ingenuity. One of these, a disastrous catastrophe at sea, was the means of involving him in a strange dispute upon the merits of his own epigrams, which in due course will be noticed. By land, Henry made several acquisitions, which in some degree compensated for his losses by sea;

and tended, as he thought, to impress foreign princes with an idea of his prowess and resources. After a tedious resistance of nearly two months, Terouenne, an inconsiderable town on the frontiers of Picardy, surrendered to his arms; and he took the rich and important city of Tournay after a siege of only two or three days. The latter acquisition supplied More with a subject for some complimentary verses. When Julius Cæsar invaded Gaul, a desperate opposition was made to his victorious legions by the Nervii, the ancient inhabitants of this district, and the slaughter that ensued was immense: it follows, therefore, according to the poet's logic, that Henry, who had become master of Tournay without any bloodshed at all, is a commander at the same time mightier and more merciful than Cæsar. Henry reaps laurels, while Tournay reaps the advantages of his protection. How much Henry was delighted with such victories, appears from the reply which More made to Roper when congratulated by him on his familiar footing at court:—"Howbeit, son

Roper, I have no cause to be proud thereof; for if my head would win him a castle in France, it should not fail to go."

Having thus examined the few poems which are of a public or national character, we proceed to others in which the writer's concern is personal, placing at the head of them that epistle to his children which has been already alluded to. The most amiable and distinguishing feature in More's private character, was the affection which he bore for his children; and if there were no other proof of the sweetness of temper so often extolled by his associates, we should not hesitate after reading these lines to sanction the frequent use of the superlatives "*suavissime*," "*mellitissime*," applied to him by Erasmus. We gain an insight into the detail of his paternal superintendence; we are presented with the pleasing spectacle of this great man in his nursery, depicted without reserve or affectation by himself. We see him folding the younger ones in his bosom; opening to them his store of sweet-meats, the mellow apple and the comely pear; and gratifying a

father's pride by procuring for them rare and costly garments of silk. We cannot read the account of his mode of chastisement, winding up with the observation,

Ah ferus est, dicique pater non ille meretur,
Qui lacrymas nati non fleat ipse sui,—

without loving him for his affectionate tenderness, although perhaps the minuteness of his description may excite a smile. It forms a pleasing contrast with the picture drawn by Erasmus, of the sternness with which Colet was at that time superintending the flagellations in his recently-founded school of St. Paul, and the good will with which Lily administered them. And yet, says More, this is merely the love with which every parent is endowed by nature, independently of any desert on the part of his offspring. He then proceeds to tell how their engaging manners, their early accomplishments, their graceful mode of speech, and the correctness of their language have so won upon his affections, that all his former love appears as nothing when compared with that which animates him

now ; and he exhorts them to persevere in the same course of improvement, until all his present love shall appear as nothing, when compared with that which he shall feel for them hereafter. How sweet must have been those acts of filial duty and tenderness with which, in the last dark period of his life, these children evinced the strength of their affection and gratitude to the kindest and best of parents !

It is satisfactory to find that the charge of cruelty brought against More, in reference to the persecution of the Protestants, the only apparent exception to this tenderness of disposition, the blot upon so fair an escutcheon, has been entirely removed by the recent investigations of Mackintosh. When More was appointed to the office of Chancellor, he found a system of persecution already established, and its machinery in active operation ; the nation was filled with horror by the excesses of the heretical insurgents in Germany, and multitudes on the continent were almost daily put to death. And yet, during the period of More's Chancellorship,

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not one person suffered death for heresy in England. In fact, the gentleness of his disposition led him to view with abhorrence the infliction of pain even upon animals ; and he represents the inhabitants of his ideal Utopia as regarding field sports in the light of an occupation for the butcher. They account it, he says, more decent to kill animals for the sustenance of mankind, than to take pleasure in the spectacle of a timorous and helpless hare torn to pieces by a dog. The same idea occurs in one of these epigrams, where he says, that in such cases mankind exceed even the wild beasts themselves in ferocity.

To shew how much these sentiments of More were in advance of the age in which he lived, it is only necessary to observe, that Ascham, his junior by nearly half a century, a man whose rare attainments in classical learning have gained for him a distinguished place among the early scholars of his country, while his unaffected kindness of disposition has been scarcely less applauded than his scholarship, was from his own con-

fession an admirer of the brutal practice of cock-fighting. His apologists, indeed, have gone so far as to assert, that few if any in the sixteenth century, condemned such amusements, merely on the ground of their involving the misery and destruction of animals. To this sweeping charge More is a splendid exception ; his gentle spirit would have acquiesced in the poet's counsel,

Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that lives.

And yet in his own person no one contemplated death with less apprehension. It is elegantly remarked by Addison, "that he looked upon the severing of his head from his body, as a circumstance which ought not to produce any change in the disposition of his mind : " and in these poems we find many proofs that he had disciplined himself to this conviction from his earliest youth. In one place he expatiates on the folly of promising to ourselves a long life, or even wishing to arrive at old age. In another, he compares life to a vast prison-house, containing a multi-

tude of wretched inmates all sentenced to death ; a sentiment, which might well have been expressed at that later period of his life, when he was confined for the space of a whole year in the Tower, and removed from his dungeon only to be conveyed to the block. A similar turn of thought may be traced in one of his " sweet and pleasant sayings," which are elsewhere recorded :—"to aim at honour here," he said, "is to set up a coat of arms at a prison gate." In another piece, written probably about the year 1516, on the occasion of an escape from shipwreck, he mournfully remarks, that the joy felt upon such a deliverance is nothing more than the momentary intermission from pain in a fever. With something like an unconscious presage of futurity, he observes, that on land there are more dangers than on the sea ; and that steel, or some malady more to be dreaded than death itself, will be its precursor. In another place he speaks of life itself as nothing better than a gradual process of dying. The oil in the lamp is continually wasting away ; we are dying even while we speak. By constant

discipline he had acquired this settled habit and conviction of mind : and at last, when reminded by the Duke of Norfolk that the king's displeasure might probably deprive him of his life, he replied, " Is that all, my Lord ?—why then there is no more difference between your Grace and me, but that I shall die to-day, and you to-morrow."

More's fondness for female society, and the susceptibility of his temperament in early life, have been alluded to by his friend Erasmus ; and the reminiscences of a boyish attachment are here placed upon record by himself. At the mature age of thirty-six, being now the husband of a second wife, and the father of four children, he chanced to meet with a lady who had captivated his affections at the early age of sixteen. From that time down to the present they had never met : and the tender remembrance of the past came so powerfully over his mind, that although surrounded by many and stirring avocations, he found time to pen an epistle, which is pronounced by Jortin to be the most poetical, and by Mackintosh to be the most pathetic and elegant of

his compositions. We take the liberty of making a few extracts from a version of it, for which we are indebted, if we mistake not, to the graceful pen of Archdeacon Wrangham :

Now on my memory breaks that happy day,
When first I saw thee with thy mates at play :
On thy white neck the flaxen ringlet lies,
With snow thy cheek, thy lip with roses vies.
Thine eyes, twin stars, with arrowy radiance shine,
And pierce and sink into my heart through mine.
Struck as with heaven's own bolt, I stand, I gaze,
I hang upon thy look in fix'd amaze.

After thus restoring to her the youthful beauty of which she had been spoiled by the lapse of twenty years, he proceeds to tell how their companions were amused with his artless attempt to conceal the passion, and omits not to hint at his reasons for believing it to be mutual. It appears, however, that he had discovered, even before Shakespeare, that

The course of true love never did run smooth ;—

for the maiden was placed by her friends under a strict surveillance, and the boyish lover was forbidden to enter the house. His

earliest affections were blighted in the bud : and although he was married twice, it is doubtful whether there was much genuine love in either case. He concludes with a prayer, that after the lapse of another twenty years they may again meet, each as now in the enjoyment of health and happiness.

Crimeless, my heart you stole in life's soft prime,
And still possess that heart without a crime.
Pure was the love which in my youth prevail'd,
And age would keep it pure, if honour fail'd.
O may the gods, who five long lustres past,
Have brought us to each other well at last,
Grant, that when number'd five long lustres more,
Healthful, I still may hail thee healthful as before !

Alas ! It was in the twentieth year from the date of this pathetic epistle, that the life-blood of him who wrote it was poured out upon the scaffold.

That this early disappointment may have produced its effect upon him, is by no means improbable. In his first marriage he gave his hand to the elder of two sisters, although he preferred the younger in his heart : and his second wife was a dame who possessed neither gentleness of temper, nor softness of

speech, nor personal attractions, nor any quality, in short, which could excite attachment; her sole recommendation being dexterity in the management of a household. Mackintosh remarks, that his daughter Margaret seems to have been the only female whom he regarded with positive respect; looking upon the sex in general as better qualified to relish a jest, than to take part in more serious conversation. At a period when even the men's education was so meagre and defective, this is easily accounted for; and More was the first to find a remedy for it. The system of education adopted by him in his own family, was calculated to exalt the female character to an unprecedented degree of excellence. In these epigrams, however, other and worse defects than mere ignorance are ascribed to the gentler sex; and he gives unlimited scope to his satirical pleasantry at their expense. When he says, in one place, that nature has produced nothing, "*quod tristius sit, ac magis viros gravet,*" than a wife; and when again he says, that she who is permitted to tread

on her husband's foot to-day, will trample upon his head to-morrow ; there is a seriousness about him which hints that he was in earnest. To a friend, whose choice in matrimony had been unfortunate, he says:—"If you treat her well, she becomes worse, and if you treat her ill, she is worst of all : she will become a good wife when she dies ; better if she dies before her husband ; and best of all if she dies speedily." The fate of an unlucky fortune-teller, who read in the stars everything except the misdeeds of his own spouse at home, is descanted upon in every variety of form. Gellia's habit of spending half the day in bed is reproved with a little quiet humour : and some sly remarks are made upon certain artificial contrivances for preserving the graces of youth, with which the ancient belles of the reign of Henry VIII. seem to have been sufficiently well acquainted.

In contrast, however, with these bitter jests, it is only fair to mention two of his longer and more studied compositions, in which is displayed such a courteous delicacy

of feeling, as will remove, in some degree, the imputations which lie upon his gallantry. The first of these is the recommendation to his friend Candidus of a wife;—a certain lady whom he describes as worthy to be classed with all the illustrious matrons of antiquity; although portionless, she will be a treasure more precious to her husband than all the wealth of Cræsus. From the translation of it by Archdeacon Wrangham, we extract the following epitome of the qualifications of a good wife:—

Next in herself be seen
Good temper's gentlest tone;
Still placid be her mien,
Unruffled by a frown.

Far from her lips' soft door
Be noise, be silence stern:
And hers be learning's store,
Or hers the power to learn.

With books she'll time beguile,
And make true bliss her own;
Unbuoy'd by fortune's smile,
Unbroken by her frown.

So still thy heart's delight,
And partner of thy way,
She'll guide thy children right,
Where myriads go astray.

So, left all meaner things,
 Thou'lt on her breast recline,
 While to her lyre she sings
 Strains, Philomel, like thine.

While still thy raptured gaze
 Is on her accents hung,
 As words of honied grace
 Steal from her honied tongue.

Words they, of power to soothe
 All idle joy or woe,
 With learning's varied truth,
 With eloquence's flow.

The other evidence of More's gallantry, is an epistle addressed by him to a certain distinguished prelate, in order to explain and apologize for an apparent breach of courtesy of which he had been guilty in his own house. It appears that the bishop had paid him a visit; and that while they were engaged in conversation together, a French lady of distinction, young and beautiful, entered the room; and remained for some time at the very elbow of the master of the house, inspecting his coins, admiring his pictures, and partaking of the viands upon his table: while he, strange and almost incredible as it may appear, was so utterly

absorbed in conversation, as never to notice her or even be aware of her presence. On being afterwards informed of it by his domestics, he entreats the bishop in the most urgent manner to explain to his fair visitor the mistake, which, in consequence of his own imperfect acquaintance with the French language, he is unable to do for himself. He devoutly prays that the earth may swallow him up alive before he commits so barbarous an act intentionally: and he argues with much ingenuity, that the same fascinating tongue which had caused the mischief, ought to prove the best remedy for it; like the spear of Telephus, which cured the wound it had inflicted.

Imagination will easily fill up the detail of this interesting scene. The earnest and expressive features of More, and the graver dignity of his guest, would be in contrast with the animated countenance of their fair companion: while her gay attire would be set off by the sombre habiliments of the churchman and the lawyer. Then the massive furniture of the apartment, the portraits

against the wall, and the antique cabinet of coins, which the lady is in the act of inspecting, would form altogether no unpleasing subject for the painter; as the scene is here presented to us in the very words of More himself.

The allusion here made to the internal arrangement of his house, affords us an opportunity of observing, that like many other learned men of the time, he took especial delight in paintings, medals, and works of art in general. Lorenzo de' Medici had a museum of gems and antique vases; Pomponius Lætus was distinguished by an insatiable passion for medals and manuscripts; and Bembo was ranked among the most scientific collectors of classical antiquities of his day. So precious were these relics in the eyes of learned men, that two medals, the one of Augustus and the other of Tiberius, were deemed worthy by More to be made a special present to one of the Emperor's privy council. During his mission into Flanders he became acquainted with Jerome Busleiden, an opulent and learned ecclesiastic at Mechlin; in

whose house he saw a progress in the accommodations and ornaments of life, which seems to have made no small impression upon him. His admiration and delight are expressed in several poems of the present collection, as well as in one of his epistles to Erasmus. In the first of these, he addresses Busleiden on the subject of his medals :—

Roma suis ducibus servata est ; ipse reservas
Romanos Româ præmoriens duces.

The triumphal arch of the conqueror is buried in the dust, but the medal presents the very features of his countenance ; and the cabinet in which it is deposited is as effective in preserving the memory of departed greatness, as the Pyramids of Egypt. In the other of these pieces, he dwells with rapture on the recollection of Busleiden's mansion, so well arranged in all its compartments, that it surely must have been the contrivance of Dædalus. You appear, he says, to have prevailed upon the fates to restore to life all the great artists of antiquity. Your sculptures, paintings, casts, and carvings,

seem to be the work of Praxiteles, Apelles, Lysippus, and Myron ; while the distich to each appended is such as might have excited the jealousy of Maro himself. Every thing about you savours of classical antiquity excepting your Organ ; and that it would have been beyond the power of antiquity to produce. He concludes with a wish, that old age may be slow in its advances, both upon the house and upon its possessor. Busleiden died, however, before this volume was published ; leaving, by his will, an endowment for three Professorships in the University of Louvain.

Of More's taste and fondness for pictures there is abundant evidence. He was the first patron of Holbein ; and it was through his introduction that this artist obtained the royal patronage of Henry VIII. Among the numerous works of Holbein, none are more noted than his groups of More's family ; and the portraits we have of the Chancellor himself, are from the same pencil. He was acquainted too with Quintin Matsys, the celebrated painter of Antwerp ; and in one of his

letters he describes both in prose and verse a piece executed by this artist at his own express desire. It represented two of More's most intimate friends, Erasmus and Ægidius : the former being depicted in the act of commencing his paraphrase on the Romans ; and the latter holding in his hand a letter from More, addressed to him in an exact representation of More's hand-writing. In his verses he extols the skill of the artist, the correctness of the portraits, and the illustrious character of the individuals ; all of which, he says, deserve a more durable material of preservation than the panel of the picture. If future ages retain any love of literature, and if the horrors of war do not obliterate the works of Minerva ; how highly, he says, will this painting be prized—how fortunate will be accounted its possessor !

In the Epigrammata also we find repeated allusions to the same art. Twice he has taken for his subject a head of John the Baptist ; the lines, however, contain little more than a comparison of Herod to some monster of classical antiquity, without any

particular reference to the painter's skill. He delights to exercise his wit at the expense of certain contemporary artists, whose attempts, especially in portrait painting, were preeminently unsuccessful. When it is considered that at this time, and for a long period afterwards, there was not in the country a single native artist of any reputation, it will account for More's admiration of what he saw in Flanders, as well as his ridicule of the miserable caricatures alluded to in these epigrams.

We now proceed to examine the remarks made in several of these poems upon courtiers and royalty ; subjects of no small importance in their bearing upon his character. Although at last he became, in one sense of the word, a courtier, being admitted to terms of social familiarity with the sovereign himself, there is abundant evidence that he was drawn into it reluctantly, and that his sentiments were of a severer character than those of courtiers in general. He once said himself to Bishop Fisher, " Hereto do I hang as awkwardly as one who never rode sitteth in a

saddle.” Simple in his attire, primitive in his manners, and passionately fond of independence, he was on every account averse to the splendid constraints of a court. Of this, sufficient evidence may be found in the volume before us. The clown who marvelled to find that the King differed from the rest of mankind only in his apparel; and the other who indulged his unmannerly wit when desired to hold a courtier’s horse; and the Flemish boor who proposed a rather puzzling question, when reproved for presuming to sit upon the same bridge with the King;—all these spoke sentiments, from which More in his inmost bosom was not much averse. His opinions respecting the dependence of all government upon the consent of the people, are laid down in a pithy epigram of six lines, with a fearlessness and freedom certainly in advance of the age. On the other hand, the emptiness of popular applause, and the folly of being anxious about the fame which it lies within the power of the unwashed artisan, —“cerdo,”—to give or take away at his pleasure, is gravely dilated upon. “What will

such honour do for you,"—he asks, as if anticipating a well known passage of Shakespeare,* — "if your finger aches?" The numerous allusions which we find to the difference between a good King and a tyrant, were doubtless made during the reign of Henry VII. To a courtier who boasted of his familiarity with the King, he gives some salutary advice; complacently alluding at the same time to the greater security of his own humbler condition, and showing that his judgment upon these matters was tolerably correct, even before he had been taught the bitter lesson of experience.

In the early part of More's life, his inclinations in the choice of a profession were directed to the church, and he was deterred from it only by a conscientious fear lest he should not be able to conform to the requisite austerities and restraint. So strong was his attachment to the public services of religion,

* Can honour set a leg? No: Or an arm? No: Or take away the grief of a wound? No.

HENRY IV. Part i. Act 5.

that after he had arrived at the zenith of his distinctions, he was accustomed to put on a surplice, and join the chanting of the choir in his own parish church of Chelsea. It is easy, then, to account for the indignation which was excited in him by the idle and dissolute practices of some of the clergy. Like his early friend and adviser, Colet, he saw that the safety of the church was endangered, and that disgrace was brought upon religion itself. He saw the necessity of practical reforms in the church ; but, like the simple-minded Fisher, he would fain have had the priesthood reform themselves. He was grieved too by their ignorance, their jealousy of the spread of knowledge, and their bigotted opposition to the study of the literature of Greece. In these poems, as well as in the *Utopia* and the letters to Erasmus, he delights in making them the butt of his humour. A certain parish priest, whom he styles *Candidus*, is congratulated on his appointment to a living. His flock, too, are congratulated upon their new pastor :—
“ Unless I am blinded by partiality, it would

be almost impossible to find another like him. Without a spark of that useless learning which serves only to puff up its possessor with pride, he is endowed with such a combination of rare virtues as could scarcely be equalled even among the ancient fathers of the church. He shows in his own conduct, as in a glass, what his people ought to do, and what to leave undone; all they require being a simple admonition to *practise* whatever they see him *avoid*, and to *avoid* everything which he *practises*."

The same person is represented in another place as loud and constant in his praises of the good men of old, but slow to imitate them: to imitate them is to be *envious* of them, and *envy* is a vice which he particularly desires to shun. In another place, the priest of his own parish is said to have delivered to his flock the following strange announcement: "To-day is the feast of St. Andrew; and I therefore give you notice, that according to the ancient and wholesome practice of the church, you must mortify the flesh by fasting—*yesterday*."

His satire, however, attacks the higher orders of the clergy as well as the lower ; and in another place, he indulges in some pleasantry at the expense of a certain wealthy prelate whom he had occasion to visit. This father of the church, whose broad acres, and ample possessions, and numerous retinue remind one of Wolsey's magnificence, received his guest with much apparent courtesy, and conversed with him in the most affable manner. No offer of refreshment, however, was made until More was about to take his leave ; and then, in order to give him a solitary glass of wine, the key of the wine-cellar is brought out of the bishop's own pocket. "If my life," says More, "should be extended to the years of the Sybil, never would this courteous hospitality be forgotten." In another place, a certain priest is addressed in these words : "Your *chanting* is so wretched that you are qualified in that respect to be made a bishop : on the other hand, you *read* so well, as to exclude yourself. Whoever aims at a bishopric must possess two qualifications,—those of reading ill and chanting

ill; if you lack either, it will spoil your prospects." It is probable, that in the latter part of the reign of Henry VII. sundry elevations to the episcopal bench may have taken place on very questionable grounds; and upon one of these appointments More animadvertes with an especial degree of severity. Professing to be delighted that so high and sacred an office is not now disposed of at random, as had heretofore been the case, he says that this person, whom he designates Posthumus, has evidently been selected with extreme care, inasmuch as it would have been utterly impossible to find a worse,—

Stultior haud possit, deteriore legi.

In another place he represents Posthumus as perpetually quoting the text,* "*occidit littera;*"—and yet he has no reason to be afraid, for of "*litteræ*" he knows nothing. At the same time, if he *should* chance to be killed by the "*littera,*" it would be a hopeless case, for

* 2 Cor. iii. 6. *Littera enim occidit, Spiritus autem vivificat.*

he has not the " Spiritus" to give him life again.

These repeated attacks upon Posthumus seem to show that his unfitness for the episcopal office was more than usually glaring ; that his want of learning and piety must have been extreme. It is tolerably certain, that of all the appointments made in the interval between the years 1500 and 1513, the range which must be allowed for the probable date of the former of these epigrams, this upon Posthumus must have been among the most objectionable. Perhaps it is not too much to limit the date to the period between 1500 and 1509, inasmuch as he is much more likely to have lifted up his voice against an appointment made in the latter days of Henry VII. than against one made at the commencement of the reign of his successor. Now in 1506, at which period it is to be observed that More's feelings towards the court were not of the most gracious character, an individual was promoted to the see of Ely, of whom the ecclesiastical biographer Godwin speaks in terms that correspond pre-

cisely with the epigrams of More. This was James Stanley, son of the first Earl of Derby, and step-son of the Lady Margaret, the king's mother. After recording his neglect of the church and diocese, and the open profligacy in which he lived, Godwin thus concludes:—"Sic voluptatibus immersus, familiâ à quâ natus est nobilissimâ tantoque munere indignus vitam exegit, et nullâ re præstitâ memorabili anno 1515 interiit." In an ancient metrical history of the house of Stanley, it is said, that although a priest, he had little "priest's mettle" in him;

As manye, more pitye, sacred orders doe take,
For promotion rather than for Christ's sake.

Of all the appointments made within the assigned period, none can be discovered which agrees more closely with More's description of Posthumus than this.

Another circumstance, however, which corroborates the presumption of this identity, yet remains to be mentioned. A certain young and illiterate Englishman, who had interest to obtain him a bishopric, had applied to Erasmus, about ten years prior to

this appointment, for assistance in his studies; to which request, although accompanied with large offers and still larger promises, he declined to accede. This person is said, by the biographers of Erasmus, to have been James Stanley. Erasmus, therefore, who was living in England, and on terms of the most familiar intercourse with More at the time of Stanley's promotion, may easily be supposed to have communicated to him his own sentiments respecting a man with whose insufficiency he had so much reason to be acquainted; while More, driven into seclusion by the king's arbitrary displeasure, would expatiate upon this abuse of the royal patronage without reserve.

The notices of contemporary literature, although somewhat scanty, are quite as numerous as we can expect at a period when literature itself was at so low an ebb. Three separate pieces are written in commendation of the celebrated edition of the New Testament published by Erasmus in 1516. In the first of these, which is addressed to the reader, he extols the judgment of the trans-

lator and the usefulness of the work itself. The old version, he says, never remarkable for its correctness, was rendered still more objectionable by the blunders of copyists; and although restored by Jerome to some degree of purity, it had again become faulty and corrupt. The present translation, however, is entirely new and free from errors.

Atque novâ Christi lex nova luce nitet.

The other two of these brief epistles are addressed to Wolsey and Warham; the one rapidly advancing in his career of ambition, having just before been elevated to the dignity of Chancellor; and the other, by whose resignation it had become vacant, having retired into a life of comparative privacy. The address to Wolsey is replete with flattery. He is extolled as the great patron of literature,

Pieridum pendet cujus ab ore chorus;

and he is assured that the honours paid him by his country, distinguished as they are, amount not to the half of what he deserves. He is entreated to look favourably upon the

work for two reasons : first, because the author is one of his admirers ; and secondly, because the work itself is the source of that wisdom, which enables him to administer justice with so much satisfaction to all parties—
“ ut victus non queat ipse queri.”

In addressing Warham, More ascribes to him the honour of having originated the work, by supplying the pecuniary aid of which those early scholars were too frequently destitute. This volume, he says, shows in an especial manner,

Quàm non ducat iners quæ tu facis otia,—

and the author desires no other reward of his labour than this ;—that the world may have cause to love you for the sake of this book, and you to love Erasmus :—

*Hanc petit ille sui fructum, Pater Alme, laboris,
 Charus ut hœc tu sis omnibus, ille tibi.*

It will not be foreign to the subject to remark, that a letter is extant from Warham to Erasmus, thanking him in the most courteous manner for conferring upon him by this book

a more lasting glory than that of princes and emperors.

If history had left us no other means to judge of the opposite characters of Warham and Wolsey than such as are furnished in these lines, we should be able to form a tolerably correct estimate. More was quite aware of the kind of compliment which would suit each of them. The somewhat fulsome panegyric upon Wolsey's patronage of men of letters and his popularity as Chancellor, indicates his ambition and love of power: while the simple intimation on the other hand, that Erasmus desires nothing so much, as that his work may secure for his patron the affections of those who may profit by it, leads us at once to conclude, that simple piety and singleness of heart were prominent features in that patron's character. And such in truth was the case. After expending the whole of his vast revenues upon the suitable hospitalities of his station and the improvement of his see, Warham when on his death-bed was informed by his steward, that all the money left in his hands amounted to no more than

thirty pounds ; to which he calmly replied, —“*satis viatici ad cœlum.*”

In another place we find mention made of a collection of sacred poems, consisting of a kind of versification of the legends of the Saints. The author, a man of little erudition, but considerable talents for poetry, had given his book to the world without pretension ; declaring in his preface that it was composed off-hand, and that the ordinary rules of verse were disregarded. In proportion, however, to the author's modesty, so is More's encomium. “To be fettered,” he says, “by the rules of prosody, would be degrading to the dignity of the subject ; and another person after long study would not have succeeded so well as this author on the spur of the moment. The unlettered reader will be pleased with the piety of the work ; while such as have been accustomed to drink at the Castalian spring, will acknowledge that it affords them as much pleasure as any book they ever met with.”

Before we leave the department of More's complimentary criticisms, we must not omit

an ode addressed to his friend Busleiden, with a view of persuading him to bring out his Muse from her retirement, or in other words, to publish his poems. The style which he uses is figurative, and the personification of the Muse is ingeniously maintained: but not feeling the interest in Busleiden's poetry with which More was inspired, we shall dismiss it at once for other criticisms of a very different character.

At the head of these ought unquestionably to be placed the animadversions upon a certain French writer, which have already been alluded to, and will presently be stated at large. His treatment of foreigners in general seems to be rather severe. Another Frenchman is told, that he is undoubtedly animated by the spirit of the ancients, for he frequently hits upon the selfsame lines which have been composed by them before. A Spaniard who had adopted an unlucky expression in reference to the "genius" of his poetry, is assured that it will be an "evil genius;" and that the immortality which he anticipates will be an immortality of infamy.

Some one in speaking of the King had used the expression "princeps cui nemo secundus:" this gives More an opportunity to laud the King and lash the poet at the same time, which he does with some ingenuity. One who professed to have written his verses impromptu, is told that the lines themselves *prove* it. At the hands of this simple-minded critic, all unfounded pretensions are held up to ridicule: and plagiarists, at that time less liable to detection than at the present, meet with as little mercy as they deserved.

In connexion with More's criticisms upon the writings of others, we may introduce some observations made by him upon a certain composition of his own. Having undertaken to write an epitaph upon one Henry Abyngdon, a musician, he proceeded to commemorate him in tolerable stanzas, as long the pride of Wells cathedral and the King's chapel, and now departed to be the glory of the celestial quires. These lines, however, did not suit the taste of Abyngdon's representative, who would have preferred something more musical,—more like the rhyming

and jingling stanzas of the monks. He then wrote another epitaph which gave complete satisfaction, of the style of which the following extract may be taken as a specimen,

Millibus in mille cantor fuit optimus ille,—
Regis et in bellâ cantor fuit ille capellâ:—

These lines were gladly accepted, and engraved upon the tomb. More, however, was not altogether pleased by the rejection of his first written epitaph; and after describing the whole affair in a third set of verses, he declares that any one who could prefer the second production to the first, deserves to be buried in the same tomb with the defunct Abyngdon, and to have his memory embalmed in the same epitaph.

We must not omit to mention his translation of two English songs: the first a doleful ditty, which might be entitled the “Desponding swain’s invocation to death;” and the other, a tragi-comic effusion upon a lover’s dream. They were doubtless among the popular productions of the day; and although Percy has not preserved them among his

He utters words would make a Frenchman stare,
With sound acute, and widely-gaping mouth,
Thinking to make at least the accent French.

* * * * *

With accent French he speaks the Latin tongue,
With accent French the tongue of Lombardy,
To Spanish words he gives an accent French,
German he speaks with the same accent French,—
In sooth he seems to speak in accent French
All but the French itself !

In his own habits, More was temperate, if not abstemious, and he seems to enjoy a fling at the excess of others. A certain Fuscus had been warned by his physician, that he must either abandon his habits of wine-bibbing, or lose his eyesight. To this he replied, that all the objects of nature around him, the earth, the sea, and the stars, had been viewed by him times without number · that there remained nothing which he had not *seen*, while there were many kinds of wine which he had not yet *tasted*. He had *seen* enough, but he had not *tasted* enough ; and therefore he bids his eyes farewell. Of a like character is the story told of Marullus, who for two days abstained from wine altogether ; but finding it impossible to keep his resolution, pathetically

exclaimed :—"Ye faithful guides, by whose aid I have been conducted hither, now must I part with you for ever !" He then sips his wine, and inhales its fragrance ; the mellow tint gradually fades before him, and he is involved in darkness. Reflecting, however, that of all the qualities which the wine possesses, that which he loses is the least valuable, he thus reconciles himself to the loss.

Although many of these epigrams remain yet unnoticed, we shall confine our remarks to a small number, and those remarks must be brief. The Spendthrift whose fortune had been lavished upon his wardrobe, is laughed at for incommoding himself by carrying on his back at one time four acres of land. The little notice taken of Physicians is in his usual vein of satire ; nor is any favour shown to his own profession of the Law. The Soldier whose fleetness had saved him on the field of battle, is told that he ought to wear his rings and ornaments not upon his *hands*, but upon his *feet*. No class of men come under the lash so frequently as the Astrologers, whose pretended powers obtained credit even among

the noble and learned : his own opinions may be taken from the following epigram addressed to one whom he calls Fabianus :—

The crowd proclaims thee wondrous wise,
If out of all thy prophecies
One only proveth true.—
Be, Fabianus, *always wrong*,
Then will I join the gaping throng,
And call thee prophet too.

To a friend who had borrowed money from him, More addresses a remonstrance, the quiet humour of which it is not easy to express in terms pithy and concise like the original : perhaps, however, the reader may be amused with our attempt :—

O Tyndal, there was once a time,
A pleasant time of old,
Before thou cam'st a-borrowing,
Before I lent thee gold ;
When scarce a single day did close
But thou and I, my friend,
Were wont, as often as I chose,
A social hour to spend.
But now, if e'er perchance we meet,
Anon I see thee take
Quick to thy heels adown the street,
Like one who sees a snake.

Believe me, for the dirty pelf
I never did intend
To ask ; and yet, spite of myself,
I must, or lose my friend.

To lose my money I consent,
So that I lose not *thee* ;
If one or other of you went,
Contented might I be.

With or without the gold, return,—
I take thee nothing loath ;—
But, sooth, it makes my spirit yearn,
Thus to resign you both.

If neither please, do thou at least
Send me the money due ;
Nor wonder if to thee I send
A long and last adieu.

It now remains for us to notice a literary dispute already alluded to, which excited considerable interest among the scholars of the age ; nothing less indeed than a discussion upon the merits of these effusions, in which the author himself took a principal part. Although a century had elapsed since the days of Agincourt, the jealous feelings of the French towards our ancestors had by no means lost their bitterness : and during the early part of the reign of Henry VIII, while

his forces were engaged in active operations against France, both by sea and land, the wits of that country took their revenge by sending out lampoons. The expedition of the Marquis of Dorset to Fontarabia was commemorated by a poem entitled "*De Anglorum è Galliis fugâ*;" and in one of his Latin epistles, More complains of other productions of a similar character. His indignation, however, was especially provoked by a poem bearing the title of "*Chordigera*," written by a courtier of the French King under the following circumstances. The fleets of the two countries under the command of Sir Edward Howard and Admiral Primauget, fell in with each other near the harbour of Brest; and at the very commencement of the engagement the French ship "*la Cordelière*" was set on fire. Her captain, finding the destruction of his vessel inevitable, bore down upon the Regent, an English first-rate, and grappled with her; thus involving in one common fate two of the finest ships in the world, and nearly two thousand men. This act of desperation was lauded in the poem

already alluded to, by one Germain de Brie, a French scholar of considerable rank and fortune : who seems to have been carried by the warmth of his national prejudices far beyond the limits not only of courtesy but of truth ; deliberately charging the English with the violation of treaties, and perjury. More proceeded to ridicule the poem in a series of epigrams for its falsehood, plagiarism, and bombast. The author, a young man ambitious of the reputation of scholarship, and living in familiar intercourse with some of the first scholars of the age, felt his pride mortified by More's satire ; but conscious of the weakness of his cause, he subdued his indignation and remained silent. At length, however, after a lapse of five or six years, the volume of More's Latin poems came out, including a reprint of the offensive epigrams, although he himself with much prudence and good feeling had expressly desired that they should be omitted : and now de Brie congratulated himself on having met with a fair opportunity of gratifying his revenge. Having scrutinized all the real and imaginary

faults which could be discovered, he summed up his animadversions in an elegiac poem entitled *ANTIMORUS*, treating More's character with as little ceremony as More had treated his own: and thus the "bellum internecinum" between the two ships, kindled a spirit of warfare no less furious and determined between the two scholars. A rumour of de Brie's intention soon reached the ears of Erasmus, who felt himself bound not only by a regard for the parties concerned, but more especially by a consciousness of having been the cause of the publication of these epigrams, to use every possible effort and argument to soothe the angry feelings of the combatants. He wrote immediately to de Brie, urging him most strenuously to abstain from publishing the satire, not only on More's account, but also on his own: reminding him that the offensive epigrams were written during the war, that their sarcasms were rather national than personal, and that if he were better acquainted with More he would acknowledge that the world did not contain a man more worthy of his esteem and affection.

He urges too the danger, lest the cause of literature should be disgraced and its progress impeded by the squabbles of its professors. This well intentioned epistle was not received by de Brie, according to his own statement, until the *Antimorus* was already in the press ; which he assigns to Erasmus as the cause of his not having complied with the request. At all events the *Antimorus* made its appearance ; and if the author's wit had been equal to his virulence, the chastisement inflicted upon More would have been tolerably severe. In reply to the charge of having borrowed too largely from the ancients, he retorts that More himself has no occasion to be afraid of such a charge, inasmuch as he is indebted to no one unless it be to the poets of his own Utopia. He censures him for having published his poems too hastily, and makes him responsible for all the errors of the press. He condemns the implied censure passed upon Henry VII. in the gratulatory verses addressed to his son : and severely animadverts upon the want of classical taste displayed in the rhyming

epitaph upon Henry Abyngdon, omitting to notice More's statement of the circumstances under which it was written. The want of candour in these criticisms is so evident, that perhaps More's reputation even as a scholar would have been very little the worse, if he had suffered the affair to drop. This view of the case was urged upon him by Erasmus; who cautions him at the same time against that acrimonious and quarrelsome spirit of which he complained in his antagonist. In writing to de Brie, he tells him plainly that the *Antimorus* meets with few readers, and still fewer admirers; and that More's abilities and learning, and loftiness of character are such as to place him far out of the reach of attacks like this. To More he says, "If you are determined to prosecute the affair, I conjure you to pursue the course you have already adopted, and to set down your adversary by reason and erudition rather than by hard words."

Although More had already got his rejoinder not only written but printed, he complied so far with this appeal as to delay

the publication of it until Erasmus's further pleasure should be known. The language, however, which he used must have militated strongly against any project of a reconciliation; and in fact he soon gave his angry epistle to the world, stimulated as it would appear by some further irritating remarks made by de Brie in the preface to another work. Erasmus, who had previously seen it in manuscript, observes to Budæus, that although his own satire is thought by some to be rather biting, it is altogether toothless when compared with this epistle. "I have no reason," More says at the commencement of it, "to complain that my own lot is harder than that of mankind in general; for I am aware that no one, however inoffensive his demeanour, can pass through life without an enemy. Since this is the case, how much reason have I to rejoice, that the friends whom fortune has given me are of the noblest stamp, and that the only enemy I have is a person whom no one would wish for as a friend, or care for as a foe; a man who when kindly disposed has it not in his power to

do me a service, nor when malignant to do an injury. And yet, I should have been angry with myself, if even such a person had become my enemy from any fault of my own."

If it were advisable, we might proceed with the detail of More's defence of himself and his poems; the pains which he took to show that de Brie was the aggressor; his allusion to a wrestler who springs up from the ground after a fall, and spits in the face of his antagonist; and his professed intention of publishing the *Antimorus* himself. But the most curious inquirer will scarcely be inclined to investigate the matter any further. To bring out the details of such a quarrel from the oblivion into which they have descended, and to expose the irritability and jealousies of these patriarchal scholars, comes not within the scope or spirit of our present inquiry.

In conclusion the author feels it necessary to state, that his little work is not committed to the press without a few misgivings. Accustomed to feel a warm interest in every thing which bears the name of Sir Thomas

More, and finding, as he thought, among the Epigrammata some gleanings not unworthy of preservation, he was induced to commit to paper the result of his examination as he went along. Such was the origin of the present volume; such its simple history. The well established fame of Sir Thomas More, his noble simplicity of character, and the undaunted consistency of his life, cannot be affected for better or worse by such trifles as these: and all that the writer of the present remarks can venture to hope for, is that some congenial minds may find in the perusal of them a portion of that innocent amusement, which the composition of them has afforded to himself.

FINIS.

C. Whittingham, Took's Court, Chancery Lane.



